My Race
My Country
My Flag

Patriotic Speech *by the*
World's Greatest Orator

Col. Roscoe Conkling Simmons

PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

A Pen Picture of Col. Simmons

By Mrs. D. M. Randle of Texarkana, Tex.

IT was a holiday in a town in east Texas, a little, drab, colorless town exactly like hundreds of other towns which make up this great southland of ours.

Standing near the railway station is a large building. This is the city hall. Scattered at intervals around their proud, imposing neighbor are nine or ten, or maybe a dozen, grim, forlorn, one-story buildings with metal roofs and dingy windows.

The steady, dreary, drizzling rain had ceased, and the little town, with its city hall, bleak stores and Confederate monument, lay swathed under a blanket of gray mistiness. From early dawn the muddy country roads had been thronged with Colored folks "goin' to town," and by 2 o'clock the square was crowded with vehicles of every description, from mule carts to luxurious automobiles, the latter being regarded with nervous suspicion by the long-eared, evil-eyed mules.

The immense auditorium of the city hall was filled with humanity from floor to roof. There were white-haired ex-slaves, reminders of the past, and college students, heralds of the future. There were farmers and day laborers, looking pathetically uncomfortable in their Sunday-best attire. There were expensively dressed, rather important mannered visitors from the larger towns; there were protesting infants and children with wide-eyed, wondering faces. Shoulder to shoulder and jostling each other for standing room were aristocratic sons of slave owners and Negro levee roustabouts, for once all class distinctions forgotten.

Ever and anon a flutter of expectancy would ripple through the crowd and there would be an eager craning of necks toward the entrance.

Finally the whisper, "He is here," ran through the throng. A sudden hush swept the house. Patiently the audience sat through the rendition of several musical numbers. A lengthy introduction.

When Col. Roscoe Conkling Simmons walked to the center of the stage there was a moment of silence, and then the storm broke. The walls fairly rocked with volley after volley of applause and high, shrill shrieks. It was a long time before quiet was restored. Standing there, with uplifted hand before this crowd of thousands, he inspired one with a sudden sense of ancient Greece and Doric temples bathed in sunlight. And then he began to talk. For two hours this immense assembly sat spellbound before his matchless oratory. For two hours this assembly glowed to his glowing and flamed to his flaming; for two hours this assembly laughed as one, applauded as one, wept as one. Never before

has our Race had such a fearless champion. With words that stung and lashed, Roscoe, "our Roscoe," as we call him down here, drove truth after truth home with such courageous force that a white lawyer who was in the audience later remarked that "If every white man could hear Colonel Simmons speak, the so-called race problem would solve itself."

And then he spoke directly to his own Race. "My people," as he fondly called them. Gazing down into the adoring, upturned faces of his people, their eyes glistening with tears, his own voice tremulous with sympathy and understanding, he purged their souls of bitter, revengeful thoughts and transfigured their faces with the glory of newborne hope. Never did he say a word too much nor a word too little. Not one time did he allow a tear to dry too quickly to be remembered. Never did he overwork a laugh. His ability for taking advantage of unforeseen incidents was superb. His mastery of words was nothing short of marvelous—living, glowing, pulsing words. His humorous character sketches were gems of actual realism. The sheer beauty of his phrasing clutched the heart and squeezed tears to the eyes.

The depth of his logic and his fearless plea for his people, caused even the Southern white press to give him praise unstinted and to speak of his genius as being "compelling," "gripping," "fascinating."

Just as a journey through a country is marked by milestones, so is our journey through life marked by events which quicken us to new activities and spur us to greater efforts.

Nothing can stand in the full light of the moon and not be silvered into poetry; so no one can come in contact with Colonel Simmons and not be uplifted and inspired with a longing for the unknown. As Roscoe Conkling Simmons stood before his people that memorable day in Texas, he was the old slave's dream come true, and the realization of the far-flung vision of youth.

When his last words, infinitely lovely and miraculously joyous, died away, white people and Colored people, still under the spell of this superman, sprang to their feet and surged forward to grasp his hand, to touch his garments. And then the crowd slowly ebbed out. The members of the other race were thoughtful, full of wonder. The youth of my Race filed out, their eyes lighted with hope, their heads flung high. Faith had been rekindled in the hearts of those whom had once heard the hiss of the overseer's lash, for they had seen a prophetic vision.

Colonel Simmons' style of oratory is his own. He reminds one of nobody else but Roscoe. His genius is not for the few, but for all. The golden notes of lark scattered on the soft summer air, the balmy fragrance of the heather blossom thrill alike the poet and the peasant. And the mighty genius of Roscoe Simmons touches at the same time the learned scholar and the levee roustabout sitting beside him. Why? Because all are God-given gifts—the song of the lark, the perfume of the flower and the genius of Simmons.

His rare eloquence, wit, the sheer beauty of his phrasing have made this man great, and have placed his name on the roll of immortals; but what is it that has made him the beloved idol, the chief reliance, the frankly accepted leader of his Race? It is his superb fearlessness, a quality which seldom goes hand in hand with our Race leaders. He is less fearful of offending the mighty ones in the South and the mighty ones in Washington than any other man who has ever worn the mantle of leadership.

Roscoe Conkling Simmons' matchless genius, his divine fire, his ability to charm and sway multitudes have not only made him the idol of his people, but have given him the distinction of being the most gifted orator on the American stage.

His cold gift of lucid exposition, his long practice as a writer, his masterly addresses have combined to make him a permanent figure in the greatest international machine ever formed in the world.

What Roscoe Conkling Simmons has to say, speaking for ten million Negroes, is as important at Berlin, or at London, or at the Vatican or at Tokyo, as it is at Washington. In this time of stress and trouble, when the Hun is at the gate, the spokesman of a race of ten millions cannot be ignored. And the love and loyalty which we give to our leader make him a personage in the group of nations allied against the hated Hun.

It is a fact that very nearly all the kings, rulers and leaders are occupying pretty shaky positions. No one can prophesy who will be the leading statesman or ruler in Russia, or England, or in Italy one month from today, or even a week from today. Let us see. Although Joffre achieved the glory of the Marne, he fell from his pedestal. Field Marshal French, once the idol of his people, was sent down to a relatively inconspicuous place in the house of lords. They finally "got" Cardona because he failed to foresee a certain military strategy of the Germans. And so it goes. Brusiloff and the Grand Duke Nicholas, Kerensky, all once greatly beloved, are now dethroned idols.

The Austrian and Hungarian leaders have been overshadowed by military lords who have succeeded each other with kaleidoscopic changes till Hindenburg was enthroned as idol of the Fatherland. How long his popularity will last we do not know. But this we do know—that next year and the next, if President Wilson is living, he will be President, and a mighty power in the affairs of the American people.

And next year, and in the next year, and in years to come, Col. Roscoe Conkling Simmons will still be the beloved spokesman.

My Race, My Country, My Flag

By Col. Roscoe Conkling Simmons

"I AM proud of many things. I am an American, thank God; there is no hyphen in my name. In time of peace I am content with the title Negro, but in time of war my white folks tell me I am a 'fellow citizen.' I have no regrets for the past and no fears for the future—none at all. I live in the only land in all the world fit to be a home for the sons of men. I am proud of my Race—the only race in the world that ever looked the white man in the face and lived; and then, I am proud of my religion! I belong to the Baptist, and likewise the Methodist church, all one, we can all live together. I am proud of the American white man. He is proud of me, too, but he doesn't say so. In the beginning God put chains on my hands and on my feet. God put a song in my heart and love in my soul. Then He broke the chains, stood me on my feet and put my hands with the hands of the American white man in the hands of destiny. 'Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder!'

"I would rather be an American Negro this afternoon, living side by side with the American white man, the most advanced representative of humanity the world ever saw; I would rather be an American Negro this afternoon, with tears in my eyes (for tears are in my eyes) and chains on my feet (for I am chained); I would rather be an American Negro this afternoon, eating bread of hope and drinking waters of faith; I would rather be an American Negro this afternoon, living beneath the Stars and Stripes, the only flag that never touched the earth; I would rather be an American Negro this afternoon, waiting all the days of my appointed time till my change comes than sit in the palace at Berlin and feast at the table of the kaiser.

"I am living in the world of wonders. I am living in America, the only free nation that the world ever knew. I am living side by side with the American white man, the most majestic figure in all the world. I am trusting him. I am living side by side with him. I will be with him in all things. 'Though you slay me, yet will I trust you!'

"When the war drums beat and the bugles called, the first question asked was, 'What will the American Negro do?' The American white man knows what I am going to do, and he knows that I am going to do it. Face to face with the enemy on the tented field are men of my Race, standing side by side with men of other races, and fighting for the greatest nation the world ever saw. We have never deserted the American white man, and we never will. All I am I owe to him. He gave me the alphabets and I became a master of arts; he taught me the sciences and enabled me to touch

the mystic keys of nature and unlock the hidden secrets of her heart. I owe him a debt of gratitude I shall never expect to pay. What he owes me I shall never expect to get at all. But I must not forsake him now. I love the American white man because he is my best friend—ye wonder child of modern civilization. The German people boast of their great masters, but where have they such masters as these that made our civilization? In oratory, where is their Daniel Webster or their Henry Clay? In poetry and song, where is their William Cullen Bryant or Edgar Allen Poe? In science, where is their Thomas Edison? In figures and banking, where is their Pierpont Morgan? Again I say, ye wonder child of modern civilization, who took the sciences of ancient and of modern time and rediscovered the hidden facts of nature; who, with astronomy, reinvestigated the stars?

"Sometimes in moments of exasperation the American white man says I am illiterate, but he must remember that he only broke the chains from my hands and the shackles from my feet fifty years ago. Sometimes in moments of exasperation he accuses me of being lazy, but he must remember that he had me chained for 250 years, with a hoe in my hand and in the heat of the sun, and if he turned me loose only fifty years ago, I must take a rest now and then. Sometimes in moments of exasperation he says I may return to the land of Africa—for what? I have lost nothing in Africa, except memory. At about the same time the American white man was landing on New England's rock-bound and rugged coast, we were landing in Jamestown. This difference, however, marked our advent upon these devoted shores. The American white man came over in first-class passage. I came over in steerage, but, thank God, the same ocean brought us over here.

"This is the wonderland of the world. Other Races came here; I was born here; this is my home and I am going to stay here.

"No man could have kept us out of this war. This is God's war—this is a chain-breaking war (and God knows I have plenty of chains to be broken). If I have one word to say more than another about this war, it is upon the indecision of the American white man who told us that we were fighting the German government and not the German people. This is the mistake he made, for the German government is of the German people and the German soldiers are all of the German people. I love the American white man because he wrote the Declaration of Independence—still the most remarkable document of human affairs. I love the American white man because he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation and stood me on my feet—because he broke my chains in battle; because Northern men and Southern men got to fighting among themselves, and I got loose. Today we are together, side by side. The American white man belongs to me and I belong to him. What's mine is his, what's his is mine, but I haven't got mine yet.

"Why do I lay down my life for the flag? Because it gave me freedom! Fall in, ye people,

fall in—fall in and fight for your native land! Fifty years ago I was nothing, today I am a man. Fifty years ago I wore chains, this afternoon I am dressed in the robes of citizenship of the greatest nation the world has ever seen. On yonder wall I see the picture of the immortal Lincoln—yes, fifty years ago. Fifty years ago I was the property, of man, this afternoon my plow turns the soil on a million acres of land bought from my former masters. Fifty years ago I could not figure, this afternoon I can figure and cipher, too, and I can sign my name to a check for a billion dollars. Fifty years ago—yes, fifty years of tears, fifty years of pain, and fifty years of anxious waiting—fifty years ago I was in chains and could not write my name, but this afternoon I can take my pen in hand and write Frederick Douglas, Dunbar, Booker T., side by side with the American white man, beneath the Stars and Stripes!

"I am proud of the American white man. Why is he afraid to answer the Huns? He is the chief figure of civilization. The Germans claim that they have built the greatest civilization that the world has ever seen—with what? He speaks of his arts, of his sciences, of his music and his poetry. Rise, rise and speak to me, masters. Who laid the cable beneath the depths of the ocean to enable one man to stand on the banks of one side of the stream and send his message to another on the other side? The American white man. Who put his finger upon the mystic key and called it the telephone? The American white man. Who built the submarine? The American white man. Who built the airship? The American white man. Who perfected the wireless telegraphy? The American white man. Who furnishes and controls the finances of the world? The American white man. Who picked up religion from the bleeding hands of Faith and taught the world what Christianity means? The American Negro! (I have got to get in somewhere.)

"Since the war began I have advanced three observations. One was that we didn't go into the conflict soon enough. You will remember that I declared war on Germany a month before Mr. Wilson did. The second observation was that Theodore Roosevelt ought to have gone to France. He would lick the kaiser by himself—Theodore Roosevelt, the greatest living white man in the world today. When he put his name on the books to carry the flags across the sea, 100 000 men put their names down to go with him—men from the North and men from the South—men from Texas and men from Massachusetts—sons of Grant and sons of Lee—sons of Carney and Booker T.—37,000 of my Race put their names to go with 'Teddy' also—37,000 strong! Thirty-seven thousand Negro soldiers, the greatest soldiers that the world ever saw. Why? Because we do not inquire about the color of our officers; the only color we inquire about is the white in the enemy's eye. Why? Because the Negro is the only man who knows how to take a command—white men always want to give a command. Thirty-seven thousand! I should like to see them speed across the ocean, on past the gates of Verdun. I should like to see them

stand on the banks of the Marne, cross the Rhine and sing a song set to the music of tears:

'In the beauty of the lillies, Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigured you and me,
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free
Since God is marching on.'

"Thirty-seven thousand! Early one morning, before the stars went down. The guard would give warning to the watchman on the tower and the watchman heeding, would speed the news to the master. 'Oh, master, master, there are strangers without the gate! Oh, master, master, flee, flee, from the wrath to come! Oh, master, flee!' And the master, answering, would ask the question: 'Who are these that press so hard upon us?' The watchman, answering in tones of dread anxiety, 'Teddy, and his blacks, knocking at the gates of Berlin!'

"The American white man knows me. He talks a lot of big talk. That is all right. I am proud of him. He is proud of me, but he doesn't say so. The man that's got all the money and land's got to talk sometime. Let him talk out! There isn't a single white man who dislikes the Negro. He might not say so, but I know it's a fact. The white man likes the Negro. If you go yonder to the White House in Washington, you will find Wilson safely and securely guarded by Negroes. If you take your card to hand in at the entrance to the reception hall, a Negro takes that card. Passing from the reception hall to another, a Negro is on guard there. Walking to his official chambers and inner circle, a Negro is on guard there. If you walk into his parlor, a Negro is on guard there. As he sleeps at night a Negro guards his weary head. If he walks out into the shades and shadows to catch a breath of evening air from the fragrance of his garden, a Negro is on guard there. In his stable a Negro is on guard there. In his kitchen, of course, a Negro is on guard there—you know he's **got** to be there.

"I am the only American citizen whom the white man can trust. The only man that can drive a truck up to the docks in New York without a permit is a Negro. My face is my permit. I need nothing else to take me to the battlefield. I have no fears for the future and no regrets for the past. The American white man today drives a chariot of eternal civilization. I am riding. Drive on, drive on! ye masters of the earliest civilization. He gave me the alphabet only fifty years ago, yet today he accuses me of illiteracy. Fifty years ago I lived in log cabins—my only house was the stars by night and God's promises by day.

This is our war, more than the white man's war. I dislike the Germans because they dislike the American white man. He is fighting me around you! Thank God! I have got a record to maintain. When the British, 150 years ago, came upon these shores to teach the ancestors of the American white man I stood by your side and fought from Bunker Hill to Yorktown, hand in hand with

you. Today I will return to join you in the fight to make the world safe for democracy. My one fear is that the war will stop too soon. This is to be a long war, make no mistake about it. I go forth to fight for the only free land the world ever saw. What makes American institutions free? Her science, arts, commerce? What makes American institutions free? Her free men.

"I'm red and won't tarnish; brown and I won't fade; fast black and I won't run.

"Way back yonder, in the beginning of time, when Hope was a child and Love was a dream—when the morning stars sang together—one morning the Master called the archangel and said: 'Bring me the map of creation from the walls of immortality; this morning I am to make nations; this morning I am to create kings; this morning I am to make thrones. Go yonder and bring me the map of creation from the walls of immortality.' And the archangel took down the map of creation, hanging on the walls of immortality, and laid it at the feet of the Master. 'Sit down, my child, and, as I command you, take the divine dictation, said the Master, and the archangel sat down, took his pen to take the Master's divine dictation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write Egypt,' said the Master. 'Oh, some day religion shall appear and the form of her civilization shall be such as the world shall never see again. Oh, some day she shall be the home of the earliest civilization,' and the archangel put Egypt on the map of creation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write Carthage,' said the Master. 'Oh, some day she shall be a nation of power; oh, some day she shall rule the world; some day the ships of all the world shall sail her seven seas,' and the archangel put Carthage on the map of creation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write Rome,' said the Master. 'Oh, some day she shall become a great empire; some day she shall rule the world; some day she shall be a mistress in warfare, and her arts and classics and her sciences shall never fade from the memory of man,' and the archangel wrote Rome on the map of creation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write Greece,' said the Master. 'Oh, some day, my child, some day, I shall make of her a great people; some day she shall be a great power. Oh, some day she shall be a nation of learning; some day, my child, some day the muses shall sing the eternal songs of love to all mankind and her music and her songs and her arts and her classics shall not be surpassed by any other people,' and the archangel put Greece on the map of creation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write Asia,' said the Master, 'for out of Asia shall be born the sleeping things of all the earth. Oh, some day she shall rise, my child, some day,' and the archangel put Asia on the map of creation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write England,' said the Master. 'Oh, some day, my child, some day, I shall make of her a great nation; I shall make of her a great people. She shall be a nation of authority; she shall be a nation of power; she shall be a nation of righteousness; she shall be a nation of justice;

she shall be a nation of peace and her ships shall sail the seas of all the world and never know defeat. Ah, my child, she shall be a nation upon whose brow the sun shall not go down.' And the archangel wrote England on the map of creation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write France,' said the Master, 'for some day, my child, some day she shall be the home of liberty' (and France is the home of liberty), and the archangel wrote France on the map of creation. 'Put your finger on yonder speck of land and write Germany,' said the Master. 'Oh, some day I shall make of her a great nation. It shall be a nation of diplomacy; it shall be a nation of education; it shall be a nation of science; it shall be a nation of art; it shall be a nation of poetry; it shall be a nation of music, a charm of beauty, of human glory; it shall be a nation of war; it shall be a nation of brutality. Write Germany.' And the archangel wrote Germany. (And Germany is a nation of diplomacy, of education, of music, of poetry, of science, of war and of brutality!) 'My work is completed for the morning, my child, fold up your map of creation and put it back on the walls of immortality—my work is done, my task is finished.' But the archangel said, 'Oh, Master, there's yonder speck of land which you have forgotten!' 'How can I forget,' said the Master, 'when I, myself, am Memory? Yonder, that speck of land is not forgotten, for some day I shall remember.' 'Then what shall I do with yonder speck of land, Master?' the archangel asked. 'Some day,' said the Master, 'some day when I shall gather the sons of Egypt; some day, my child, when Asia shall be sleeping; some day when I shall gather the sons of Germany; some day, my child, I shall take from the sons of Italy; some day when I shall take from the sons of France and of England, I shall put my finger on yonder speck of land. They shall come from the East and from the West; they shall come from the North and from the South, and I shall make of them the greatest nation the world has ever seen, and they shall be gathered as one people, and they shall be a people of genius, of ideals, of law, of religion and of might. And they shall be assembled on yonder speck of land. They shall be a nation of one people; they shall be a nation of one purpose; they shall be a nation of one constitution; they shall be a nation of one law, one government, one future and one destiny; and this nation shall have one name on yonder speck of land. Write America!'

"We must not expect to understand everything. White folks don't understand everything. They can't fool me. Not long ago they passed an espionage bill against unpatriotic utterances. That bill doesn't aim at us; it aims at white folks, for we know how to keep a secret. The only man that knows how to keep a secret is the American Negro, and the only reason we can keep a secret is because we have no one to talk to. White folks don't want us to talk to them, so we just have to talk to ourselves.! They have practiced lawlessness on us so long that they would have us keep a secret now. We know how to keep our mouths shut.

"I want you to do everything that you are asked to do now. Respect the command of Mr. Wilson. He is my leader. The captain of my country is at Washington, not in Berlin. No man can serve two masters at one time; and if no man can serve two masters at one time no man can serve two flags at one time! I know but one flag, and that's the flag that set me free. I know Old Glory. Sometimes, Old Glory, they say that you do not protect me, but that is all right, Old Glory. Sometimes they say I am Jim-Crowed under you. I am! They say I am disfranchised under you. I am! White folks disfranchised me, but God's own time is coming to enfranchise me! I was born here under you, Old Glory. That is, I did not come here by transportation. I never talk about white people. I talk with them, face to face. I have got a right to talk to them! I am part of the household. I am in the family. You got me in the kitchen, but I can talk to you. I have got my time and I am awaiting it. Buy the Liberty Bonds. I have got my button and I am wearing it. I only take mine from over my heart when I ride the Jim-Crow cars. White folks can Jim-Crow me, but they can't Jim-Crow my country.

"It is our privilege to live side by side with the American white man. Sometimes they tell me I want to put him in the skies. I do. The only way to get him out the of the way is to put him in the skies! I have not asked you to come down. Step up higher on the ladder of eternal fame; step up higher; I only want the rung on which you are standing. Sometimes he accuses me of imitating him. It ought to be a compliment to imitate him—to imitate somebody. We have got to imitate somebody, and that somebody must be you, for we have passed everybody but you. Why should I not imitate him? I have worked for him 250 years for nothing, and now he is working for me 250 years for nothing. He writes the books; I read them. He builds the railroads; I ride them.

"This flag, the American flag, is the greatest flag the world ever saw. I am not talking about the hand that's got the flag, but the flag. Once I was down and that flag stood on my feet. Surely, Old Glory, it was you that made me free. Once I was chained in log cabins; Old Glory you loosed my chains and took me out into a home. Old Glory, it was you that made me free. It was you that taught me who I was. You put the alphabet on my tongue and gave me words of wisdom, Old Glory. You gave me homes with pictures on my wall, Old Glory. Side by side with George Washington, that most majestic figure of renown, stands Master Lincoln in his picture hanging on my wall. On the other side I see pictures of a believer's motto, "God Bless Our Home,' Old Glory. It was you that gave me these, Old Glory, it was you. It was you that taught me how to figure, Old Glory. You took the hoe from out my hands and put a pencil there. It was you that gave me law, Old Glory. Yes, Old Glory, it was you that put the marriage certificate on my wall and let me know at last, Old Glory, who the fathers of my children were!

"This war has brought me closer than ever before to my white folks. I am going to stay this time. Sometimes I do not understand him, but I have always been his friend, I never have deserted him. When I ask you for the bread of friendship, you give me the stone of hate. Why do you hate me? What have I done? I have made you the thing you think, do or say. I have made you the greatest figure of modern time—the richest nation that the world ever saw. What have you done for me?

"The Negro is leaving the South every day; they have asked me to stop it, **but I can't stop it.** The preacher can't stop him; the teacher can't stop him; the doctor can't stop him; the financier can't stop him; but the Southern white man can stop the Negro. I want to stay in the South. This is my home. Others may go, but I am going to stay. All that is dear to me was born here and my dead was buried here, but I can't say to those of my people who are going into a strange land, 'Stay.' I am not going to say that, for there is only one man to stop the Negro from going to the North, and that is the Southern white man. He knows me, although he does not know me half as well as I know him. One-ninth of the total population of our people can not speak for themselves, but I am going to speak for them. I lay down the terms for those who cannot speak for themselves: When you shall open wider the doors of education for the children, we will stay—we will stay. We will stay when you cut the lynch rope from our necks and the chains from off our feet, we will stay. We will stay when your court houses become temples of justice and your judges speak languages of law—we will stay. We will stay to make you captain of the world; we will keep you in the White House, when sheriffs stand before the doors of the mob and say, 'No, no, this is my prisoner, touch him not!' We will stay. We will stay, yes, when you take us out of the valleys; else I am on my way!

"The only business I have got in the present is the business of my Government. When the registration cards were issued I noticed that they had the phraze attached to them: 'If of African descent, tear off the corner.' My white folks do not know what to do. Always have their hands on me. Turn your hands off me, turn them on the Huns. I am not after you! For a long time I pleaded to know what this mark meant. The American white man is long on foresight and the Negro on hindsight. I know now what it meant. Three or four years from now, when the test comes, Germany shall have been raging, our soldiers, 200,000 strong, shall have fallen to the ground—make no mistake about it, women with your sorrowing tears—make no mistake. They shall fall to the ground—they shall fall. Governments shall go under and princes shall depart. Four thousand miles from Texas they shall fall! Pershing, or the commander of the American expeditionary forces, standing in amazement, shall take a piece of paper and write a cable: 'Send me soldiers. Victory is gone and has perched itself upon the back of the Eagle. Defeat stares me in the face. Send me soldiers; soldiers

that can fight; that can stand any blow and roll back on the enemy's heel. Send me soldiers that have been trusted and found true. Send me soldiers that love their country and their flag. Send me soldiers; soldiers that fought for the Declaration of Independence, to meet the kaiser face to face. Send the best soldiers you have got.' And tears will be in Pershing's eyes. 'Take this cablegram and read it,' the provost marshal shall say to the adjutant-general: 'Defeat has come to our army; send him soldiers that can fight; that can look the kaiser in the face!' The general will put his hand on the case and pull out the draw, with three or five hundred thousand cards and the tears will come to his eyes as he hands these cards to the provost marshal, who will say, 'Send these, with the corners torn off.' Fall in ye swarthy sons of Africa, fall in!

"I want you to be like the American white man in all things, except religion. I move by the past and not by the present. Two slaves instruct me—one was white and one was black. Two slaves, I say—two slaves. One was white and one was black, and both were Americans. Two slaves instruct me, I say—two slaves—one was white and one was black—the only teachers the government has ever seen. One picked me up from the dust of despair and put it on the throne of righteousness; one made music for the hearts of his own people. Two slaves instruct me, I say. One was white and one was black. One was the father of an idea and the other the child of an idea. Two slaves instruct me—one was white and one was black. One broke the shackles from off me and the other taught me how to live. One was Abraham Lincoln and the other was Booker T. Washington.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' said one of olden times. Perhaps the parsons can bear me out in this. Am I right, parson? There are those who still criticise Mr. Wilson. Thank God, I belong to a Race where there are no slackers, no spies, no I. W. W.'s. I am an American, standing side by side with the American white man. I am proud to stand beside him. He is proud to stand there, too. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' I stand this evening and knock on the door of the heart of Texas; on the heart of the white man, of authority, of power, of learning. I knock on the door of American wisdom, of American love. Open, I will speak to you for 12,000,000 people who cannot speak for themselves. If you don't care to fight for the flag stand back! With all my burdens I will fight; with all my tears I will fight. Lead me to the field, show me the battle line. I stand and knock for this generation; I stand and knock for these sons of men. Let me speak to the great American white man. Take the chains from off my wrist. Take the fetters off my hands and the rope from around my neck. Blow out the torch that burns my children at the stake and I will take the Declaration of Independence and sail away across the sea and make the kaiser and his hordes 'shem-me-sha-wobble' into the River Rhine, and then return upon the wings of victory.

In the papers yesterday there was a report from General Pershing, who denied the allegation that American Negro soldiers were put in the danger zone. He ought not to have made that mistake. That is where I belong. It takes a man to be in the danger zone! We do not care to have any man in authority make excuses for the American Negro. We will do our part of it. I care nothing about the kaiser, I am only concerned about my white folks here. Our white folks got us into all this trouble. Fear not, fear not! I will bring you out. The only white man I would like to be, if I were not a Negro, is the American white man. I belong to one Race—the only Race in the world, whose future is before it and not behind it. The American white man is always looking 'way back at his ancestors. I am always looking before me. He is descending, he is coming down, whilst I am ascending, going up to meet him.

"I have an abiding faith in the growing sense of justice of the American white man.

"I am going to make the world safe for democracy. Order me in the daytime and in the night I will stand by you and we will make the world safe for democracy. I offer 300,000 of my own men, and we will make the world safe for democracy! White boys and black boys will stand together, as God planned! And when that job is completed across the ocean and I will return and knock on the golden door of the American white man: 'Look here, Captain, you sent me four thousand miles to make the world safe for democracy; now, won't you make my country safe for me?'

"Let us be patient and trust ourselves to the promises of God. He is greater than all laws, higher than all governments. The Declaration of Independence is nothing in His hand. My master brought me here 300 years ago from Africa. It is true that the Negro came 300 years ago, but let me say that there is going to be more than 300 years before we will go back to Africa. If we started back the white man wouldn't let us go.

"The American white man knows everything about the world, **except the American Negro** living in his home. This has been a tearful season with us. We walk in the shadows and talk in the sunshine. I belong to the wonder Race of the world. Sometimes they tell me that the Anglo-Saxons are the wonder race of the world. He is no more the wonder race! The greatest white man living in the world is the American white man. Besides him there is no other. Don't touch him. I will handle him, if nobody else can. That is why I know what I am fighting for. Sometimes they tell me I am fighting for the open seas. I am fighting for my nation; I am fighting for the only flag in the world that has stars in it. 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star!' I am fighting for the children of my nation without regard to race or color; to die the death the brave must die that liberty may live I am fighting for the past and the rich achievements of the present. I am fighting for the future, when the morn shall break and throw the light of victory upon the souls of twelve million people, and to keep sixty million more white people from

these shores. I have trouble enough with my own white people.

"I have got enough trouble of my own. I want no trouble with any one else. If there is a Negro who is ashamed of his Race send him to me and I will have him shot at sunrise. What song have you written? What tune have you played? What pledge have you made? You belong to the Race of Booker T., the greatest teacher that the world ever saw. It is said of the Jews—that mighty race called the Jews—'way back yonder when the world was young, that eternity is in his hand and keeping; that great race that produced Moses, the wonder child of the world, and Julius Rosenwald, because they were never ashamed of their race.

"I am the favored child of the world. I am the mystic figure. No one understands me. No one embraces me and comprehends me. No one approaches me. I am the wonder child of today. I live side by side with the greatest man of any time—the American white man.

"France is the only true republic in a democracy, and America the only true democracy in a republic. I knew that when France went to the battlefield I would have to go; therefore, I fight for France.

"The two twins in the world of genius are Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. Jefferson was the greatest mind the world ever saw, Lincoln the most remarkable figure of our history, and yet these were not good enough to be my king. The only **king** I know is the **American ballot.** I have no king, the **ballot is my king!** The man who is good enough to pull the trigger of a rifle on the battlefield is good enough to put a cross-mark on the American ballot!"

I turned from thrones and kings, from wise men of the past, from figures of renown, passing the mighty of all ages and periods—I turned to the tomb of Lincoln, there to inquire of the crownless king of humanity, what of Armageddon, and what now of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man? Of him I sought to know, what word might I whisper in the eager ears of my people?

I knocked on the door of the tomb, standing in the heart of Shiloh. There was no response. For the second and the third time I knocked, and no answer came. I turned to leave. My master spoke, but not from the tomb. He asked what I sought. Flattered, I informed him that I came seeking some word of hope for the former slave, given at the death of their Emancipator into the hand of the former owner of slaves. This was new to history, I went on, bold enough now that I had gained the benediction of the immortal American:

"Let me ask you a question before I answer yours," I heard him say. "Tell me, my child," he urged, "tell me, does the Star Spangled Banner still wave over the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

I told him that it still waved there, and was waving also above the war-cursed lands of king-ridden Europe. "Go back, then," he said, "and tell those who sent you that I died that men might be free; that I was crucified on the Cross of Secession that government might live, and that, step by step,

all the children of God might ascend to the more perfect view."

I turned to bring the message back, and I heard Ethiopia burst into a song, a song from the heart of her chief singer, and she sang it to the ancient tune of broken tears:

"That for which millions prayed and sighed,
For which so many freely fought;
That for which tens of thousands died,
God will not let it come to naught."

"I love America because it has been to me, despite limitations, a land of opportunity. I read the promise of the future by the light of the past.

"With patience we wait and with hope we serve until the Stars and Stripes—Old Glory—shall float above Berlin and peace and justice shall know each other face to face.

As white and black learn day by day to adjust, in a spirit of justice and fair play, those interests which are individual and racial, and to see and feel the importance of those fundamental interests which are common, so will both races grow and prosper. In the long run no individual and no race can succeed which sets itself at war against the common good.

—BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.